

Department of Health

During this 2004 legislative session, the department helped enact many of the Lingle-Aiona Administration's proposals to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our health care system and enhance the overall health of the people of Hawai'i.

Highlights of these new laws include measures that enhance our state's adult mental health system, and increase the department's ability to check the criminal history of potential employees and care providers for mental health programs.

The Administration was also able to establish an individual's right to make mental health care directives in advance, ensuring their confidence that those directives will be followed.

Another important measure protects school children from harmful exposure to second-hand smoke. It prohibits the use of tobacco by employees at public schools and prohibits tobacco use at public school functions.

To reduce prescription drug costs and waste, DOH worked with the legislature to pass the nation's first law establishing return, credit and re-use procedures for unused prescription drugs within health care institutions and authorizes donated drug repositories.

Other important measures approved this session will:

- Provide support for additional drug abuse treatment services;
- Increase education about and control of infectious disease through the sale of sterile syringes by licensed health care providers;
- Streamline the process of making new generic drugs accessible to the public; and
- Improve the effectiveness of operations at the Department of Health.

- Dr. Chiyome Fukino, Director